

And now I ask Chief Justice John Roberts to administer the oath of office.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:12 a.m. in the Great Hall at the Department of Justice.

The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Attorney General Mukasey.

Remarks on Presenting the National Medal of Arts and National Humanities Medal November 15, 2007

The President. Thank you all. Good morning. Laura and I welcome you to the East Room for a joyous event, the presentation of two sets of important awards: the National Medals of the Arts and the National Humanities Medals. These medals recognize great contributions to art, music, theater, writing, history, and general scholarship.

We congratulate the medalists. We welcome your families. We thank your loved ones for supporting you. And on behalf of a grateful nation, we honor your great talent and accomplishments.

Obviously, I'm pleased to be here with my wife. [*Laughter*] I am proud to be here with Mrs. Lynne Cheney as well. I thank the Members of the United States Senate and the United States House of Representatives for joining us as we honor our fellow citizens. I'm so pleased to welcome Dana Gioia, Chairman of the National Endowment of the Arts, and Dr. Bruce Cole, Chairman of the National Endowment of the Humanities. Thank you all for coming, and thank you for your leadership. I'm proud that a fellow Texan, Adair Margo—is the Chairman of the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities—has joined us.

Our honorees represent the great strength and diversity of the American culture. The winners of the arts include a Native American poet, an orchestra conductor, a composer of choral music, a pioneer of electric musical instruments, and

a man whose last name is synonymous with fine American craftsmanship. Our honorees have created some of the emblematic images of our time, supported museums and theaters, and helped nurture young talent.

The winners of the humanities have also made great and lasting contributions to our society. They include scholars and historians and a philanthropist. These men and women have shaped our understanding of the past, chronicled stories of tyranny overcome by liberty, and helped preserve our cultural treasures for future generations.

Your accomplishments will remind us that freedom of thought and freedom of expression are two pillars of our democracy. These freedoms have helped our Nation build some of the finest centers of learning in the world. They've helped inspire new movements in art and literature, and they've helped fill our libraries and museums and theaters with great works for all our citizens to enjoy.

America is committed to supporting the arts and humanities. For more than four decades, the National Endowment of the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities has helped enrich our culture and deepened our appreciation for the ideals that bind us together as Americans. Some interesting programs that are run out of these important institutions, like “We the People” and “American Masterpieces,” that expose a new generation of Americans to American history and literature and art.

And Laura and I strongly support these programs.

It is now my privilege to present the National Medals of Art and the National Humanities Medals. Once again, I congratulate our honorees, because in your work, we see the creativity of the American spirit and the values that have made our Nation great.

And so now I ask the military aide to read the citations.

[At this point, Lt. Cmdr. Dan Walsh, USCG, Coast Guard Aide to the President,

read the citations, and the President presented the medals.]

The President. My wife.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:03 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Lynne V. Cheney, wife of Vice President Dick Cheney. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Secretary of Transportation Mary E. Peters and Federal Aviation Administration Acting Administrator Robert A. Sturgell
November 15, 2007

Thanksgiving is a week from today, and Christmas will quickly follow. This is really a time of joy for our families. Unfortunately, this is also a season of dread for too many Americans. Holiday travelers faced with the prospect of long-delayed and canceled flights and lost baggage and other problems have become all too often an occurrence. In other words, there's a lot of people that are worried about traveling because they've had unpleasant experiences when they've been flying around the country.

And so this is a topic that I've just discussed with Secretary of Transportation Mary Peters and the Acting Administrator of the FAA, Bobby Sturgell. It's one thing to analyze the problem, but the American people expect us to come up with some solutions. And that's what we've been talking about. And one of the reasons we have a sense of urgency about this issue is that these problems that we've been discussing are clear to anybody who has been traveling. Airports are very crowded; travelers are being stranded; and flights are delayed,

sometimes with a full load of passengers sitting on the runway for hours. These failures carry some real costs for the country, not just in the inconvenience they cause, but in the business they obstruct and family gatherings they cause people to miss.

We can do better. We can have an aviation system that is improved. And that's what we're talking about. Secretary Peters and Acting Administrator Sturgell have been working with the airline industry on practical improvements. I want to announce a series of preliminary actions to help address the epidemic of aviation delays.

First, the military will make available some of its airspace over the east coast for use by civilian airliners this Thanksgiving. These new routes will help relieve air congestion from Maine to Florida for nearly 5 full days surrounding the holiday.

Second, the FAA is taking new measures to head off delays. Bobby Sturgell will impose a holiday moratorium on all non-essential projects so that the FAA can focus its personnel and equipment exclusively on keeping flights on time. The FAA is also